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**AIM:** Why was the Nile River considered a “gift” to the ancient Egyptians?

**Do Now:** Create a list of reasons why living by a river, which provides fresh water, would be a benefit to society.

**NYSS:**

2. Use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in world history and examine the broad sweep of history from a variety of perspectives.

3. use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of the geography of the interdependent world in which we live—local, national, and global—including the distribution of people, places, and environments over the Earth’s surface.

**Instructional Goals:** Introduce the importance of having a consistent fresh water source into the social studies curriculum.

**Instructional Objective:** Students Will Be Able To….

* Understand the pros and cons of living near a river valley.
* Identify the ‘Gift of the Nile.’
* Analyze how ancient Egypt benefitted from living near the Nile River.

**Materials:** The Gift of the Nile handout.

**Procedure:**

* Have students complete the Do Now assignment. Take care of administrative tasks.
* Have students work with a partner to discuss their responses from the Do Now. Students should compare their lists of positives for living near a river.
* Elicit student responses. Record student responses on the board.
* Discuss some of the negatives to living near a river.
* Lecture on ancient Egypt and the Nile River.
* Distribute the ‘Gift of the Nile’ handout.
* Have students read the handout.
* Facilitate the room as students work on their writing assignment. They should elicit the information both from the handout, and their lists from the Do Now assignment.
* Share out student responses.
* Discuss summary question.

**Summary:** What’s the connection between the Nile River, and the success and progress of ancient Egypt?

**Homework:** Create a list of things you use fresh water for today. Research where we get our fresh water from today. Write a paragraph based on what you find.

**The Gift of the Nile**

Every year, the great Nile River in northeastern Africa flooded its banks. As the waters rose, the people of ancient Egypt offered thanks: “Hail to thee, O Nile, that issues from the earth and comes to give life to Egypt.” They praised the Nile for nourishing their land and cattle and for filling their storehouses with food.

The fertile lands of the river valley attracted Stone Age farmers. In prehistoric times, migrating people reached Egypt from the Mediterranean area, from hills and deserts along the Nile, and from other parts of Africa. As these early farmers produced more food, populations grew. In the Nile Valley, a powerful civilization emerged that depended on the control of river waters. Egypt, said the ancient Greek historian Herodotus, “is wholly the gift of the Nile.” Without the Nile, Egypt would be swallowed up by the barren deserts that surround it. While the desert protected Egypt from invasion, it also limited where people could settle.

Farmers took advantage of the fertile soil of the Nile Valley to grow wheat and flax, a plant whose fibers were used for clothing. By the time of Herodotus, Egypt had been producing large amounts of food for thousands of years. It had become known as a “breadbasket,” exporting food to other parts of the Mediterranean world.

The Nile rises in the high lands of Ethiopia and the lakes of central Africa. Every spring, rains in this interior region send water racing down streams that feed the Nile River. In ancient times, Egyptians eagerly awaited the annual flood. It soaked the land with life-giving water and deposited a layer of rich silt, or soil. An Egyptian hymn expressed the happiness of the people during this season: “If the Nile smiles, the Earth is joyous, Every stomach is full of rejoicing, Every spine is happy, Every jawbone crushes the food.” People had to cooperate to control the Nile floods. They built dikes, reservoirs, and irrigation ditches to channel the rising river and store water for the dry season.

**TASK:** In what ways was the Greek historian, Herodotus correct in his description in calling the Nile River a ‘gift’ to the ancient Egyptians? After reading the ‘Gift of the Nile’ handout, write a paragraph that addresses the question and support you position from evidence from the text, and prior knowledge.

**Extension**: Write an additional paragraph acknowledging competing views.

